



STATE OF THE CITY

WOODSTOCK, GEORGIA 2009

Donnie Henriques, Mayor
January 25, 2010

As with 2008, 2009 proved to be extremely challenging for our nation, the State of Georgia and the City of Woodstock. Besides the economy, we faced a natural disaster, termed a 500 year flood with the event that occurred in September. I am pleased to be able to tell you that we not only survived another year, but we made tremendous progress towards accomplishing our collective goals.

Administration Department

In 2008, the City purchased the former Robert Harris Homes Building to address the City's critical space needs, improve operating efficiencies and provide for our future growth needs. On June 1st, the City Hall Annex opened for business. Employees from two different buildings and three portable buildings were consolidated into one office building, accomplishing our goal of improving efficiencies of operation.

In part to honor our commitment to maintain a presence in Downtown Woodstock, the City purchased the Woodstock Community Church in September. Situated on 3.5 acres, the acquisition gives the City needed right of Way for expanding Towne Lake Parkway, preserves public parking in Downtown, and opens up a world of possibilities for the future. We have already begun the design process for renovating the 1912 Sanctuary in order for Council meetings to return to Downtown. The site also allows for the possibilities of a performing arts center, parking deck and office space in the future.

To facilitate the purchase and to help take advantage of favorable bond rates, the City created the Woodstock Urban Redevelopment Authority.

The City also issued a TAD bond for purposes of constructing a railroad pedestrian crossing in Downtown Woodstock.

On the personnel side, an electronic timekeeping system was instituted in 2009 to assist with automating the City's timekeeping and payroll processes. This system has proven to be very effective, and assures taxpayers that employees work time is accurately accounted for and "ghosting" is no longer a possibility because of the fingerprint system.

Finance Department

The Finance Department was awarded the 16th Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) in 2009.

The Finance department also coordinated the issuance of a Tax Anticipation Note, TAD bond and URA bond.

Finally, the position of Purchasing Manager was created to assist with moving the City towards a centralized purchasing system. Crystal Welch has proven to be a great addition in this position, while continuing to improve herself while employed by the City, working to receive her degree while continuing her employment.

Community Development Department

The codification process for the Land Development Ordinance (LDO) was begun in 2009. Working with Municipal Code Corporation, the LDO will now be in a codified form similar to the Code of Ordinances, thus eliminating internal conflicts in the LDO and improving the format to present the LDO in a much more user friendly manner.

The design phase of the Rubes Creek portion of the Greenprints Trail was started in 2009. With the help of the County Bond approval, construction should start within this Fiscal Year.

The design was completed of the Taylor Randall Mountain Bike Trail, consisting of fifteen miles of mountain bike trails connected to the Greenprints Trail. With matching money from the City and SORBA, this long-awaited trail project, which was dedicated in 2001, will finally become a reality.

Duane Helton was named as the Interim Building Official in December. I have personally received 3 compliments from Business and Residential owners on their dealings with Duane since he assumed this position.

The RFP and review process was completed in 2009 for a new development software package for the City.

Despite the slow economy, I am pleased to report to you that permits were issued for the construction of sixty-six single family homes in 2009. This number is amazing considering what is happening around the rest of the State and Country. (Side Note: 10 permits issued so far in January, by far the best month in over a year.)

Downtown

The Main Street Program was successfully launched in 2009. This new program composed of residents and business owners will be a positive force in the development of Downtown Woodstock for many years to come.

The Woodstock Farmers Market was successfully launched this past summer. Over twenty vendors participated in this twelve week experiment that turned out to be very popular and successful. So popular, that I must tell on myself and let you know I went to buy something at the market.....unfortunately it was the week after it ended.

The DDA co-sponsored with FBC Woodstock, LGE Credit Union, Woodstock Elementary School (WES) and the City the development of a xeriscape garden at the entrance to WES as part of the Loveloud Project. Besides beautifying the entrance to the school, this garden will be used as a teaching tool to demonstrate drought tolerant/resistant techniques and plants for both the students and the community.

The DDA contracted with the Woodstock United Methodist Church to secure forty-three public parking spaces in Downtown.

The City purchased a lot and constructed the new Wheeler Street Parking Lot, which opened in November. This parking lot added thirty-nine parking spaces to Downtown. While this may not be a permanent situation, it has alleviated a parking problem in this area since the opening of Pure.

In an effort to better communicate with residents and to assist Downtown business, the DDA launched a new FACEBOOK page in April and has since acquired over 1,200 fans.

In 2009, I regret to report that twelve Downtown businesses closed. But I am pleased to report to you that fourteen new businesses opened. I don't know if there are any other Cities in the area that can say they have a net gain in business development this year.

Fire Department

Chief Jerry Smith retired in May with over twenty-three years with the City. Dave Soumas was named Chief in May. Jimmy Ely was named Assistant Chief/Fire Marshall in June.

Almost 1,900 inspections were completed by the Fire Department in 2009.

During the September flooding, 128 people were rescued and evacuated by boat, with no casualties or injuries. This fact is in direct correlation to the training and dedication of the personnel of this department.

Parks and Recreation

Work was completed and the William G. Long Senior Center opened in the former Building Department building in October. This move was made possible by the consolidation of facilities into the New City Hall Annex. Over sixty new members have been added since the Center moved to its' permanent home. This move has been so popular; I will speak to the Council during our upcoming retreat about expansion of the center in the future. On a personal note, having 3 pool tables in a separate room was ideal for the 2nd Annual Mayor's Pool Tournament. We feel that next year, we will be able to expand the field to allow for more players....even bad ones, like myself.

The 12th Annual Woodstock Summer Concert Series completed another successful year. 2009 acts included Shawn Mullins, Shenandoah, the Randall Bramblett Band, the Swingin' Medallions and the Great American Rock and Roll Revival. The concert series added its' first title sponsor in 2009, Northside Hospital-Cherokee.

Site work was completed at the Woodlands Park, with anticipation that it will open in the fall of 2010.

The City entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with Cherokee County for use of \$5 million dollars of the County's Parks and Recreation Bond to be used to construct multiple phases of the Greenprints Trails over the next twenty-four months.

The new Veteran's Memorial was completed and dedicated on Memorial Day 2009 at City Park. My personal thanks go to all those who served on the Committee, especially my comrades from the American Legion Post 316, led by Charlie Tucker and Michael Sarris. Most of my thanks go to Marybeth Stockdale, who took on the project with the same passion as I had about it, and saw that every detail from selection, to construction down to the ceremony for dedication was done properly. The resident's response to the bench program has far exceeded our expectations, forcing redesign of the surrounding areas to accommodate additional benches.

Planning was begun for the concept of expanding City Park into the site of the former City Hall on Arnold Mill Road. The plan includes the construction of an amphitheatre to host the concert series.

Police Department

David Bores was named as Chief in January 2009. Bart Giesey was named as the Assistant Chief in March.

The department completed a departmental reorganization in 2009 and achieved full staffing of authorized sworn officers. All new supervisors completed leadership training in 2009.

The Chaplain's program was instituted this past year. We are pleased to have Rev. Ron Anspaugh from First Baptist Church of Woodstock serve as our first chaplain.

To improve security and officer protection, all first responding officers were furnished with rifles. The department also expanded the number of TASERS assigned to officers.

To better improve communications with residents, the department began utilizing Twitter and Nixle.

Again, on a personal note, I attended a Use of Force class along with 4 new officers in training, taught by Officer Mike deCocq. This is part of my personal goal of becoming a qualified gun owner and licensed carrier.

Public Works

Pat Flood was named as Director of Public Works in January 2009

The City completed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Georgia Department of Transportation for construction of the Rope Mill Interchange. The City is in the process of acquiring the ROW for the project which is slated to be awarded in March 2010.

Construction was completed on the Pine Hill/Noonday sewer project. This \$3.25 million project replaced several miles of older sewer lines and upgraded their size to accommodate future growth.

A new turn lane was constructed at Wigley Road. New traffic signals were added at Sycamore Lane and at the River Park Subdivision. Plans were completed for the City's first roundabout at Haney Road.

Crosswalks and signage were installed in the Brookshire Subdivision.

In conclusion, the past four years have flown by. I am pleased that the team that has been in place for most of this time returns, intact, to complete the many projects that were started or planned. Government is frustrating, especially to those of us who have the luxury of owning our own business and being able to see decisions made and put in place without undue delay. But, experience in office has taught us not only patience, but alternative methods to get things done, in a more timely manner. While still a glacial pace compared to the private sector, we are starting to see the result of some of our efforts over these past few years.

I've said often, when it comes to the City budget, we have done the "heavy lifting" the last two years, going from an approximately 35 million down to around 29. However, this upcoming budget process promises to be just as challenging. In other words, as an offshoot from last year, this coming year is "Doing Even More, with Even Less".

Even so, we must continue the projects we've started, and continue to plan for the City's future. While we have purchased several properties over the last few years, there will be more opportunities come up this year....and we should consider them carefully. When a market is down or at its lowest is the time to acquire a larger part of the market. Of course, I'm speaking mostly of park space, as well as the proposed Elm St. Project. Combining the Arts with our planned EcoTourism, will bring hundreds of thousands of visitors to Woodstock....which will become a destination for travelers who will spend hotel and restaurant dollars, as well as shop in our local retailers. This is the main ingredient that will help us keep the millage rate low or even allow us to lower it even more.

So, to paraphrase Betty Davis from a movie long ago, "buckle up, it's going to be a bumpy ride".



MAYOR AND COUNCIL

Donnie Henriques, Mayor

Randy Brewer, Council Member Ward 1

Chris Casdia, Council Member Ward 2

Robert Mueller, Council Member Ward 3

Tracy Collins, Council Member Ward 4

Clyde E. "Bud" Leonard, Council Member Ward 5

Steve Faris, Council Member Ward 6

CITY ATTORNEY

Eldon Basham, Moore, Ingram, Johnson & Steele

CITY MANAGER

Jeffrey Moon

KEY PERSONNEL

Tracie Barnes, HR Director

David Bores, Police Chief

Henry Bucci, Chief Financial Officer

Pat Flood, Public Works Director

Richard McLeod, Community Development Director

Jim Moore, IT Director

Billy Peppers, Economic Development/DDA/CVB Director

Rhonda Pezzello, City Clerk

Preston Pooser, Parks and Recreation Director

Dave Soumas, Fire Chief

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www.woodstockconcertseries.com

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